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DISCOURSES OF RACIAL PREJUDICE
AN ANALYSIS OF DISCUSSIONS ON OPEN SCHOOLING

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ABSTRACT

Three groups of four males (seventeen years old) discussed Open Schooling. Each group completed a short attitude scale on the same topic before and after each discussion. The groups were from three schools - two "white" schools: an Afrikaans and an English medium school; and a "coloured" English medium school. Discourse analysis was used as the method of analysis to identify patterns - and their functions - within the discourses. Racial prejudice was of particular interest, and the topic of Open Schooling was used because of its significance within the present South African context. The volatile nature of the topic was expected to generate affective involvement in the discussion due to the investment of the adolescents concerned. The "coloured" school was expected to be differently positioned in the discourses of open schooling. The results demonstrated that racial prejudice was also included in the repertoire of the coloured school.

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INTRODUCTION

In the present South African context, race is a highly emotive issue. The exploration of racial attitudes is particularly salient in the changing nature of South African society and in anticipation of future events. Foster (1986) notes that the processes involved in the acquisition of racial attitudes are perhaps the most important and least researched aspect of race-attitude development. The data collected in South Africa suggests that parental influence is more pronounced in white than black adolescents, and shows a stronger relation in younger white children than in adolescents (ibid). (This difference was revealed by less negative attitudes towards black people by adolescents on an attitude scale.) Another study showed that though adolescents seemed to hold less prejudiced views than younger children or their parents, "subtle forms of differential categorization" were nevertheless present (ibid). A study conducted at Rhodes University demonstrated that in the context of a supposedly non-racist campus setting, covert racism was rife (Louw-Potgieter, 1989). It seems possible that the findings regarding adolescents as less prejudiced than younger children or adults may be biased by a higher social desirability element, not revealed by an attitude scale.

Racial prejudice is defined by Aboud (1988:4) as an organized predisposition to respond in an unfavourable manner towards people from an ethnic group because of their ethnic affiliation. This definition presupposes an underlying stable attitude which

can be assessed by means of questionnaires or attitude scales. It denies the concept of language as actively constructing versions of the world which vary according to their functions and the purpose of the talk (Potter and Wetherell, 1987:33).

Racial "attitudes" as used in this study refer to "a complex schematic structure of general opinions which need not imply a negative orientation" (Van Dijk, 1987:27). Attitudes as assessed by scales and other quantitative measures capture only one aspect of the "fluid, subjective and social nature" of the language of ethnicity (Schofield and Anderson, 1987:257). The constraints acting to ensure validity and reliability in these methods limit the data, affecting its often contradictory and discordant nature. The biased and "unreliable" content of much discourse of racial prejudice provides as Van Dijk notes (1987:19) "precisely what we want to know". Van Dijk says, "Especially when delicate topics are discussed, and when the social norms are rather strict, face-saving is essential: the expression of even the most racist opinions tends to be embedded in moves that are intended to prevent the inference that the speaker is a racist."

WHITE SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLING

McGurg (1988) notes that the South African private school system, and even the entire state system, has been modelled to a remarkable degree on the English public school. "Even the striped blazers Afrikaans students wear are a reminder of the

fashionable dress of the English gentleman of the '20s." The Afrikaans school is in essence a state-funded private school which reproduces the state elite hierarchically from State President to civil service clerk (ibid). The English private schools, on the other hand, reproduce the economic elite. These two groups have thus staked out "political and economic control in a dialectical interdependence" (ibid). McGurg notes that though there may be religious, as well as cultural values that particular groups in society want to preserve through their schools, an analysis of South African society's class structure reveals that the whole private school network is completely tied into the capitalist structures in the society, and functions to maintain the economic dominance of certain groups, thus reproducing the hierarchical ordering of our society. The reason so few black people are admitted to private schools, says McGurg, is to maintain the touted "standards of excellence" - in academia, sport and cultural traditions. "An appeal to academic standards only confirms suspicion of the hegemonic control of the academic competitive curriculum and whose group interest it serves" (ibid). As McGurg notes, talk of abolishing apartheid is facile while South African schools fundamentally reflect the economic and political structure of society.

A report by a work committee of the South African Teachers Association (SATA) which was accepted by the 1989 conference of SATA outlined directives that could be of practical help to SATA members and to the schools. These included the recognition of problems such as curriculum and syllabus, resistance to change

on the part of parents, teachers, and pupils, and "undemocratic" structures and procedures which are incorporated under the rubric of "traditions". The report also notes, under the heading The Meaning of Non-Racialism that: "It is recognised that in the short-term, some form of affirmative action will have to be taken in order to redress historical imbalances. Legislation to 'discriminate' in favour of deprived people might have to be introduced as a temporary measure." These suggestions were incorporated in the attitude scale of this study (see Appendix 2).

DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Discourse analysis as a method is utilized for this study on racial attitudes and racial prejudice, because it views the individual not as a fixed entity, but one which "emerges through the process of social interaction, and is constituted and reconstituted through the various discursive practices in which they participate." (Davies and Harré, 1990). Individuals do not necessarily consciously construct accounts - "but a construction emerges as they merely try to make sense of a phenomenon or engage in unselfconscious social activities like blaming and justification" (Potter and Wetherell, 1987:34). This is particularly salient in accounts which contain racial attitudes. The variable nature of language is inconsistent with the concept of language as an unambiguous pathway to actions, beliefs or actual events" as formulated by traditional quantitative methodology. As Potter and Wetherell note (p. 34),

accounts of the same issues - especially an issue as sensitive as race where the social norm is towards tolerance - vary according to context and respondent. These accounts actively construct reality in a profound sense. Thus, valid and reliable data in the traditional sense does not demonstrate underlying stable traits, but demonstrates that valid and reliable forms of accounting share the same functions, for example, justification or blame. As demonstrated later in the discussion, accounting which shares the same function can nevertheless be contradictory.

Discourses on open schooling in a white South African school setting, free of methodological constraints, inevitably reveals the multiple positionings indicative of the controversial issue. These positionings are not always rationally based, because as Henriques (Henriques et al, 1984:88) notes, "wishes and desires can push and pull in different directions." Henriques notes that the norm of rationality promotes the suppression of contradiction which can then be dealt with by the projection on to others of denied characteristics in the self. Henriques (p. 89) says: "Certainly blacks, like women, have been constructed as possessing the characteristics which are negatively valued in white western culture ... the valued norm remains white, blacks being evaluated according to their distance from it.

The changing reality of South Africa is reflected in the prevailing zeitgeist of white South African attitudes towards

racial issues. The majority of English and Afrikaans speaking white South Africans today accept superficially the inevitability of black political equality. Within this broad acceptance of the need for change, there are multiple and discordant discourses. These centre around the specific realities of change which will affect the lifestyles to which white South Africans have become accustomed. The logic of Open Schooling affects adolescents significantly, both on an intellectual and an affective level. The subjects from Wittebome, being clearly demarcated "coloured" and thus neither white nor black, are an "unknown quantity". The study seeks actively to understand their positioning in discourse.

This study attempts then to explore the differences in talk on a specific racial issue - Open Schooling - between three clearly demarcated groups - male subjects of seventeen years of age from three separate schooling systems - "white" English speaking, "white" Afrikaans speaking, and "coloured" English speaking. Using a discourse analytic approach, the differing, and also the consistent patterns or positionings of these subjects will be examined in an attempt to understand the functions and consequences of the ways subjects talk of Open Schooling.

METHODOLOGY

SUBJECTS

Subjects were seventeen year old schoolboys from Standard 9 and Standard 10. They were randomly chosen from three schools of differing ideological tendencies - Zwaanswyk Hoërskool, Wittebome High School (both co-educational schools), and Rondebosch Boys' High School. Adolescents of fourteen years of age were originally intended as the focus of this study because they have presumably internalized the multiple and contradictory discourses of their parents and have also a well known predilection to conform to the opinions of their peers. They are then a rich source of contradictory and conflicting discourses without the experience necessary to validate them. The "self" of an adolescent will seem to be a prime site for the exploration of contradictory discourses. Convenience (as far as the first guidance teacher was concerned) dictated that the first group comprised seventeen year old subjects, and to achieve consistency, the other groups utilized were matched for age. The disadvantage in the subsequent age of the subjects was in that open schooling was not as salient an issue for the pupils of Rondebosch and Zwaanswyk, for whom this was their last year at school. To control for gender bias, only male adolescents were used in this study. Subjects were selected by the guidance counsellor of each school who randomly selected four boys from Standard 9 or Standard 10.

PROCEDURE

Each group discussion lasted approximately half an hour. These were arranged at a time convenient to the guidance teacher, in a separate room on the school premises. Each subject was given a short attitude scale to complete both before and after the discussion, and identified these by his Christian name and "before" and "after" (Appendix 1). Discussions were held around a table and audio-taped with the researcher present. These tapes were later transcribed. The presence of the researcher was undoubtedly inhibiting to the full expression of views by the subjects concerned. This was far less noticeable at Rondebosch than at Zwaanswyk and Wittebome where discussion was noticeably inhibited, particularly at the beginning. Wittebome (and to a lesser extent, Zwaanswyk) utilized their attitude scale to promote discussion and continually looked to the researcher for reaction and/or feedback, despite encouragement to continue the discussion within the group. The implicit social norm which prevents explicit racial talk, particularly with a stranger known to have come from the University of Cape Town, was evident in all the discussions.

The transcriptions concentrated on establishing patterns of communication, identified different speakers and their terms-of-talk, and included pauses (untimed), hesitations and laughter. Wittebome's recording had two short inaudible portions which could not be transcribed. The subjects from Zwaanswyk, Wittebome and Rondebosch are respectively referred to as Z1, Z2,

Z3, Z4, W1, W2, W3, W4 and R1, R2, R3, R4. The study concentrated on establishing patterns in the discourse of race relations, and followed the procedure outlined by Potter and Wetherell (1987), looking at the processes involved in positioning, and asking "how" rather than "why" racial prejudice is formulated and reproduced in conversation. The subjects were assured of confidentiality and asked to be as frank and honest as possible in their approach towards the topic. They were told they could talk about anything to do with open schooling, as well as use the attitude scale to promote discussion. The study's objectives are to explore the discourses of Open Schooling to identify themes of race and racial prejudice within the three groups of boys.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The utilization of an attitude scale before and after the discussion showed results that were insignificant because of the small numbers of participants. The sole significant results was present in Zwaanswyk's change of attitude towards the statement: "Contact between black and white pupils in open schools will eventually reduce racial prejudice. On this statement Zwaanswyk changed substantially towards disagreement after the discussion. The mean on each statement (including both "before" and "after" scales) is included in the appendix to illustrate each school's average position on each statement.

It was assumed that the discourses of the schools would be different in content depending on the ideologies of the schools concerned. What was striking however was that in all three schools the strong sense of identity in traditions was encapsulated in the dominant discourses, for example, in talking of uniforms:

R1: Well if that's how things go, are we going to have uniforms?

R2: Ya!

R3: Ya!

R4: I don't see why not. Why shouldn't we?

R3: You've got to have uniforms - maybe not for other schools but still I think we should.

R4: It's a tradition!

W3: I think 6 [Talking of "School uniforms should not be compulsory". This was the middle of the scale between agreeing and disagreeing.] because, because people should be proud of their school. Okay, that's why their uniforms count and they - um - to the black people too!

W2: (We) should have a uniform everyone can afford because so, like - um - discipline; because if people are all dressed the same, then you'll all feel the same about your school.

Z4: Also for school uniforms - it is neatness. It is neater and is - some people - they're proud of their school. If blacks start coming in, and we don't wear school uniforms

anymore, then most of the pupils won't be proud anymore of the school.

Interestingly, in Zwaanswyk in the previous example, the lack of pride in the school uniforms seems related as much to black people coming in as to the absence of uniforms. Also, for Wittebome, lack of discipline was strongly related to reluctance to open schools. For example:

W2: On that one ("Schools should be open to all without regard to race") I got number 2 there, because I do agree with it quite strongly, but because of that - the matters of discipline - I haven't gone right up to number 1.

W2: Well, the first one then - I think that they - um - should be open. School should be open to all races, but um, there are a few problems, like discipline problems and stuff. I don't strongly agree, but more or less agreeing with it, but not strongly. [Laughter] Okay.

"I'm not a racist, but ..."

The dominant discourse of the three schools is identified as "I'm not a racist, but ...". It is interestingly as representative of Wittebome as it is of Zwaanswyk, but is far more explicitly expressed by the Afrikaans school, and it is covertly manifested in the discourses at Wittebome. It often justifies discrimination by putting the onus on to those who are

victims of prejudice. As Wittebome subjects themselves are victims of discrimination generally in society, this contradiction was manifested when open schooling was discussed in phrases like:

W1: I don't strongly agree, but more or less agreeing with it, but not strongly.

The "I'm not a racist, but ..." repertoire is characterized in all schools by justification of this position. It is interesting to note how different schools characterize this justification differently at different points in the discussion, and for different areas of prejudice. The different reasoning used includes:

- (a) "Black people are violent"
- (b) "Black people are academically inferior"
- (c) "Us - them"
- (d) "The 'fairness' factor"

For instance, the academic inferiority of black people is cited for the rejection of open schools because of the potential dropping of standards in schools. At other times "cultural" differences and "lack of communication" is cited as ensuring racial separation in open schools, and thus justifies the rejection of open schools. Zwaanswyk at another point cites harmonious contact (social and sexual) as a justification for

segregation because of its likely promotion of the "coloured" race (to be discussed later).

(a) "Black people are violent"

For Wittebome, lack of discipline previously expressed is seen to be subtly related in open schools to a violent element which might be encouraged, and which again is subtly related to black people. For example, in talking about contact between the races leading to a reduction in racial prejudice:

W3: I just - I think - I put number 6 - I really feel that it would depend on individuals. If you get along with anybody, or if you can get along with most, then I don't think it would be a problem. But if you're the violent type, there's going to be a problem for sure.

W3 uses "individuals" and "types" concurrently as if they mean the same thing. This serves the function of justifying categorization by denying it.

Violence comes up again when talking of the few black boys already in their school:

W1: I think there are 4 or 5 blacks here already and they didn't find any trouble mixing with the rest of the students - but you do get the odd violent one, man, and that makes a difference.

"Find" is an interesting word in this context - having connotations of trouble (or prejudice) present, but not discovered. Violence in relation to black people is also, and less covertly, mentioned at Zwaanswyk.

Z3: Yes, like Robert said, he's got a little sister - in the future he doesn't want her to see what will be going on, and I think what he means is the crime.

Z2: Um, not quite. I really don't - the crime as well ...

Z1: The intimidation?

Interestingly, this characterization of the "blacks" as violent is undermined by Z2, who earlier says:

Z2: They may not have the chances we have, but you can't just open the doors to every school right now, because the difference - uh - would be too great between the different races. Because if you really want to have racial intimidation, I think, the race influence is already in the school.

He seems to be referring to an antagonistic element within the school towards racial integration which will actively institute racial intimidation against black pupils.

W2: I still think it's very important - the type of person - because as Lawrence said - if it's a violent person, you

won't be able to get along with that person.

There is a covert but consistent categorization of blacks as violent in Wittebome. By contrast, whites are not described as potentially violent, but potentially racist. The violence here is unconsciously expressed as belonging to Wittebome:

W1: ... but then in the case of, say, um, a white comes to the school - then it would depend on that person's character as an individual, because if that person is a racist, there's no way that he's going to get anywhere in the school. People are going to pick on him. There's going to be the same done to him.

Wittebome pupils are seen to be caught in a double-bind situation; torn between being discriminated against as a "coloured" school and despising the racism of the "whites", but at the same time problematizing opening their school to all races because of the previously noted "matters of discipline" and the "violent types". Only one out of four subjects voted that he strongly agreed with opening schools to all races. The others cited "discipline problems and stuff" as justification for not doing so. This disguises an intolerance of other races ("blacks") with talk of "standards dropping" and "cultural differences". As Van Dijk (p. 81) notes, this protects the subjects against questions or inferences about their personal opinions. When asked directly by the researcher: "Do you think

your school is racist?" there is a long pause and then there is laughter.

W1: I, I, um - I don't - think so, um, definitely not.
[Laughter]

J: Is that a funny question? [Long pause - laughter]

W2: We, um, we haven't had a lot of, um, just a few black pupils - I don't think our school is racist but, um, uh - black pupils - they are just - some people they don't get along with each other - just because they don't like that person - not because of his colour - just because they don't get along with him. 'Cause - their personality - not ...

Van Dijk (1981:114) notes that this is an example of interactional problem-solving and impression-management. The first steps of the reply are hesitations ("I, I, um") followed by a first hesitant denial which is taken up more forcefully a second later. The question, and the following one, visibly and audibly confuse the subjects. That "racist" in this context is taken by Wittebome subjects to mean discrimination against black people is obvious from the reply. Again, the individual (the "personality" of the person) is brought in as a justification for any discrimination. Wittebome subjects consistently talk of consequences of open schooling depending on "the individual", yet they subtly categorize black pupils when they talk of discipline and violence. They emphasize particularization of

people while themselves implicitly categorizing black people in terms of violence and lack of discipline.

(b) "Blacks are academically inferior"

Rondebosch's racial prejudice is less subtle than Wittebome and is preceded by outright denial:

R1: Okay, I'm not a racist or anything, but [laughs] the bottom of the class were always black guys, okay? Now the more black people you have - in your class - then ...

The justification here is to problematize open schooling because of academic inferiority. There is consensus in the group that an entrance exam is a prerequisite if schools are to be opened.

R3: But if you have an entrance exam - like - all the people are going to say we're being racist - we haven't ever had an entrance exam before, but suddenly when we open school we -

R2: Ya, but why, why should that be racist? It's just because you're increasing the areas and the numbers which they come from. Therefore we've got to be more and more selective. It doesn't mean that black people are not going to get in ... [long pause]

Zwaanswyk's racial prejudice - also part of "the blacks are academically inferior" discourse, manifests explicitly as

"blaming the victim" (Henriques, 1984:88) and is linked to psychodynamic projection - the "systematic (unconscious) projection of denied characteristics onto another group".

Z2: I think that if people can't cope with the standard as it is now they don't really deserve the chance to do it - if they don't want to do it. If they can do it, they can do it - if they can't do it - they just - tough luck, that's all!

Z3: They must actually do good in their school before they come to our school - they must be the same.

J: Alright, but someone might say to you that they haven't had the chances that you have, you know - so what about that?

Z4: We build schools for them but most of them burn them down [laughs]. So it's their own fault if they want to do that - But then there is some that want to learn.

The function of this discourse is to effectively blame the victim of prejudice for the discrimination practised against him. This discourse was consistently used in all 3 schools which discussed Open Schooling. The exception to this particular discourse which implicates black people in the discrimination practised against them academically, comes from Zwaanswyk.

Z3: I've got this friend in South West and he says that their standards are quite - very - high, and the Standard 8s are now doing accounting into Standard 9 work now - and the

white girls are actually going out with black guys and they all mix.

This is a reversal of the previous indictment against academically inferior "blacks". It is an exception to the generally formulated viewpoint of all the schools in this discussion. Fascinatingly, it is placed in context with a version of blacks and whites integrating socially - and sexually. Thus, although it rejects a version of academically inferior "blacks" - it draws on an equally plausible reason for discrimination - the sexual integration of "blacks" and "white". This pattern is repeated in Zwaanswyk later in the discussion.

R2: I still think it (open schooling) is going to increase - um - relationships between the different - um - races - as it is on the increase right now. But I think that when you open the schools then it will definitely increase when you're in the same classroom, maybe in the desk right next to you, if you're going to have a person of another race next to you, you're going to tend to involve yourself more with people of other races, that would increase the birth of, of children - of the coloureds. I mean, how would you feel if you had a boy or a girl, and it was coloured? I mean you wouldn't be able to - I mean in an [inaudible] you'd have to go and do some research on the history of your boyfriend or girlfriend or whatever just to find out if she is white or black or whatever [laughs].

This is an interesting exchange in that the fear of racial intermixing is readily apparent. Unlike previous exchanges it views this intermixing as positively magnetic rather than repulsive. The same subject went on to say that his family did not believe that this mixing would occur.

Z2: No, they said it wouldn't happen - people just like go on forever - but that's not logical thinking in any case because it is obvious that if you mix with other people of other races that - I mean - come on, come on! Everybody's human - if you do mix with other races you are going to fall in love with that one, get to like that one, become friends with this one. I mean - and it's going to be one multi-raced South Africa [long pause].

The most fascinating aspect of this account is its complete reversal to R2's earlier account of potential inter-race relations at school. He had previously justified his rejection of the statement on the attitude scale "schools should be open to all without regard to race":

Z2: I, well, like it is now, it is very, very obvious that there would be differences between people and they would not get on as well - from right now it's impossible. Really, nobody can tell me that if they open the doors now everybody can get along fine. It's not going to happen. it's just not going to happen. And racism - I don't think - I mean - if everybody, if all the races suddenly went

together bang, um, there'll be a lot of conflict. Racism, I don't think'd be decreased in that way - rather increased - as people don't understand each other because they're not from the same cultural level as other races.

These extracts are equated in that they perform the same justificatory function - a rejection of open schools. But fascinatingly, the first portrays a reversed image - that of races getting along together - "too well".

(c) "Us and them"

Van Dijk (1981:104) notes the use of "pronouns of power and solidarity as a form of social distance marking". Thus ethnic groups are not referred to by name but as "they" or "them". As he reports, the pronominal contrast between "us" and "them" has even become stereotypical in its own right and achieves the avoidance of naming the relevant ethnic group. It is often also accompanied by "functional hesitation" (Van Dijk, 1981:112) in which hesitations in the conversation are typical in positions in which an ethnic group must be named. This is true of all groups who discussed open schooling, but particularly Zwaanswyk.

Z4: There is schools of - uh - other races - uh - that I think their standards on the same as ours. Maybe if they want to come to our school their standards must be - they must

actually do good in their school before they come to our school.

Very noticeable in the next extract from Zwaanswyk is the negative connotations of the ethnic group's replacement. here even those viewed positively are referred to as members of "the gang".

Z1: Yes, there are some that want to learn, but then there are always the few - of the, uh - gang, you may say, concerned, who don't want to, and intimidate the others and burn the schools down.

Rondebosch subjects manifest this same "us-them" tendency rather differently by articulating a version of the future in which their integrated school is still unproblematically referred to as a "white" school.

R3: Ya, I don't know if blacks necessarily want to come to a white school.

R1: They don't.

R3: I think they would rather actually just lift their standards.

J: But it wont's be a white school.

R3: - or, or, whatever. Why would they want to come, come to here - they could just as easily - I think they might rather want to keep - um - what do they want to mix with whites now?

R2: No, man, of course they want -

R3: What's, what's so wonderful about the whites that everyone wants to come running ...

In Wittebome School on the subject of dropping standards to allow black people to catch up:

W1: I don't - well - I'm between strongly agreeing with and strongly disagreeing. I'm half-way - about half-way [laughs]. I'm not quite sure of that one because, um, some people could be clever but have an inferior education [long pause].

W2: Okay, but I got number 5 there because I do agree the standard has to drop a little to accommodate for the inferior - uh - students, but you can't drop it too much.

In the first extract there is the indication that an inferior education is not too much of a handicap and that it is people's lack of intelligence that is the problem. In the second extract, the students, and not the education, are referred to as being "inferior". This is an example of lexical leakage (Spence, 1980:139) in which the importance of unconscious elements of speech is emphasized. Wittebome's manner of accounting oscillates in the "us-them" discourse, between one in which they view themselves as discriminated against and which aligns them with the "blacks" and another in which they actually participate in discrimination against "blacks". This oscillation is also emphasized in the above extract which ends

"I'm between agreeing with and strongly disagreeing. I'm about half-way." This confusion is very apparent in the contradictions which arise in the next extract.

W2: What about the prefects? I think that is very similar to the, um, sexist issue - the discrimination of the females. I think this is very similar because, like it was said, females shouldn't have, um, this thing that bosses - they'd rather have entrusted men just because they're men. I mean they're, they're the same sex. I mean, he should entrust them because he had reason to trust them and the same goes for the prefects - they must have reason to trust the person to do his job properly in the school.

The subject is referring to the statement on the attitude scale which reads: "The prefect selection should be changed to incorporate a proportion of black prefects relative to the number of black pupils in the school." It is clear from the context that the Wittebome subject views the attitude statement above as reverse discrimination, though he compares it to a situation in which the discrimination is against a minority group, that is, women. (Minority here refers to lack of power, and not numbers.) He has inverted the situation so that black people are placed in a favourable position simply because they are black and not because they are deserving of the position. It is clear that by arguing against the situation, black people are not seen as disadvantaged, nor is he himself invested in a minority position.

J: But then if you've only got men at the top or only white people - then how can the black people or the women really have a chance to compete?

W2: ... in that situation I would say that you should open up so that everybody gets graded or chosen by the same standard, you know. They're not chosen on a superior race or anything like that, because there is no such thing as a superior race.

Whereas previously the subject was seen to be interpolated into the majority position, critical of reverse discrimination, he now seems to be critical of the opposite position. It is not now totally clear who is the "superior race". It could be either "black people" who are favoured because of their colour, or white people. Wittebome's uncomfortable oscillating position is emphasized again.

Zwaanswyk's interpolation into the "us-them" discourse is by far the most distinctive.

Z1: ... but they - we - don't come from the same background. They love soccer and we love rugby - and I don't think we will communicate very well, because we were raised in different backgrounds,

and

Z1: ... most blacks are Catholics and I think most of our children are Protestant and I don't think it will combine, because they have other methods of doing things and so on.

Here the dichotomy between "us" and "them" takes on a concrete if trivial character with the differences in sport and religion perceived by Z1.

(d) "The 'fairness' factor

Fairness is a repertoire used by the three schools to justify maintenance of the status quo. What is "fair" is defined by what is fair to those in elitist positions. In discussing the statement: "School uniforms should not be compulsory in open schools because of the expense to black families." Rondebosch unanimously agreed on keeping uniforms.

R3: No, I don't see a problem! [belligerently]

The status quo is viewed as unproblematically fair. What is perceived as unfair is change in any way detrimental to white interests.

Z4: I don't think the standards must be lowered because - it isn't going to be good for us.

Z1: I don't think it must be lowered because you do the standard you're doing now and if other races come into the school and it's lowered, I think it will be very difficult at university and so on, because then you have to work just a little bit harder and give more understanding, and put more effort in your work.

Z3: If our standard is lowered, um, because they're coming here - we're not only going to suffer in university, but also maybe later on - and just because we didn't - because our standards were lowered at school.

Part of this "fairness" repertoire is recalled by Rondebosch's earlier position; and unconsciously projects the elitist status quo.

R3: You should be voted on your abilities, not just because of the colour of your skin.

R4: Mm. That's reverse racism.

W2: Well, I don't think you should select prefects on the colour, based on colours or something. You must just take into account what kind of character - what kind of people they are - because a person can be white but he can be irresponsible, and he wouldn't be a very good prefect.

Here the same Wittebome subject who previously used the colour argument against the minority position, uses it against a "white" element, but placing the "white" element in a minority position. The previous passage from which the above extract was taken involved a discussion of white attitudes in general towards individual Wittebome students, and this may be the reason why a white, rather than a black person was interjected into the minority position at this point. This passage again highlights Wittebome's unique stand in the open school

discussion - prejudiced against other races themselves, yet aware that they themselves are victims of prejudice.

There is an irrational element in this "fairness" dialogue which relies on the projection of unaccepted characteristics on to others, for example, as recalled previously:

R3: I think you should be voted on your abilities, not just because of the colour of your skin.

R4: That's reverse racism.

None of the white subjects consciously realized the irony of their situation - in which they are "voted in" precisely because of the colour of their skin. They vociferously condemned the "unfairness" of a situation in which they might be disadvantaged by Open Schooling. Fairness is defined by the present state of affairs. When pressed for a view of the country as run by a black government and schools open without regard for academic discrimination, the three schools reacted much according to their previous form.

W2: In that case it would be best to, like, try and meet them half-way, you know, like drop half, and try to arrange the inferior education half-way. Drop the superior half-way and try and meet them on a half-way level and maybe they could work it out from there.

Rondebosch has the most concrete ideas for forestalling this "unfair" eventuality, by including entrance exams, among other suggestions.

R2: Well, Rondebosch would become private then - they'd apply.

R1: ... It can - you can just push the funds up.

R3: ... Then you apply for immigration [laughter].

Z3: I personally don't think that they will take over in the near future, but ...

J: What's the near future?

Z3: Well, ten or twenty years.

Z2: ... I mean suddenly I was a normal South African and suddenly I'm a new South African [laughs]. I don't know. Who knows.

Z1: ... there's going to be war, because I don't think most of South Africa's white men don't want a black state president or prime minister or something, and if that happens, the whites will fight for their country.

These last three extracts highlight the three schools' separate solutions to the problem of open schooling, and reproduce their existing power-relations in society.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to explore the racial attitudes and racial prejudice of adolescent South Africans. It did so by introducing Open Schooling as a topic to three clearly demarcated groups within South African society: Afrikaans, English and "coloured" subjects. The topic of Open Schooling was utilized because of its controversial and salient nature within the present context of South Africa, and particularly the school context. It was expected that contradiction would occur within the dominant discourses of the participants, and this expectation was confirmed. What was wholly unexpected from the researcher's point of view were the ambivalent positionings of Wittebome subjects, which nevertheless reflected their positioning in the larger society.

It would have been interesting to have had recourse to a "black" school in order to reconcile their discourses with those of the three "races" used in this study. The utilization of an attitude scale was particularly useful in delineating topics of discussion within the framework of Open Schooling, though the results were insignificant because of the small number of participants involved.

This study has attempted to demonstrate and understand the take-up in discourses of power relations in society within the separate groups that constitute that society. Van den Berg (1985) argues, with Foucault, that "practice arises out of

discourse, embodies it, perpetuates it, solidifies it". Problematic discourse can easily become less problematic practice: the problematic discourse that young people should be segregated through their schooling has become acceptable practice far more than we realize, because every day we experience as normal to be apart and not normal to be together."

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- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11
- strongly agree strongly disagree

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- strongly agree strongly disagree

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